DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 135 125 LC 092 952

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TITLE Educational Diagnosticians and School Psychologists: Colleagues or Competitors in Working with the Learning Disabled.
PUB DATE Aug 76
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the International Scientific Conference of IPLD (3rd, Montreal, Canada, August 9-13, 1976); Best Available Copy

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Diagnosis; Elementary Secondary Education; Emotionally Disturbed; Foreign Countries; Instructional Staff; *Learning Disabilities; *School Psychologists; *Specialists; *Staff Role
IDENTIFIERS *Quebec

ABSTRACT

Described are the roles and functions of four learning disability specialists in the French educational system of the Province of Quebec. It is explained that the "orthopedagogue", the specialist concerned with the learning aspects of the school problems, may work with individual students in small groups or with other teachers as a consultant. The "orthophoniste" is said to be a language specialist concerned with speech and hearing problems, while the "psychoeducateur" is described as being concerned with the reeducation of emotionally disturbed students and juvenile delinquent teenagers with learning disabilities. The fourth specialist discussed is the school psychologist, whose role is seen to be changing from a medically-oriented diagnostician to a classroom observer and consultant. (CI)

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ED135125

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Educational Diagnosticians and School Psychologists; Colleagues or Competitors in Working with the Learning Disabled

by Gaston Gauthier, Ph.D.

Paper presented at the symposium
of the
International Federation of Learning Disabilities,

August 9th 1976

EC092952

My role is to define the educational diagnosticians when they work with the learning disabled in the context of the educational system of the Province of Quebec.

Characteristics of the educational systems of the nine other Provinces being quite similar to the one of the American educational systems, characteristics of the educational system in the Province of Quebec may present differences and some specificities.

As the English part of the Ministery of Education is quite similar to the other , found in Canada, I will speak about the French educational system of the Province of Quebec, but limiting my outline to the learning disabilities specialists.

The educational diagnosticians who are mainly concerned with the pedagogic aspect of helping the learning disabled are the specialists in orthopedagogy, in orthophony, in psychoeducation and in psychology.

An outline of the roles and functions of these specialities and their relations will help to undestand their types of activities.

The specialist who is the closest to the pedagogic aspect of education is the "orthopédagogue". The "orthopédagogue" is concerned with the learning aspects of the school problems. His interest is with the intellectual and physical causes of learning disabilities. The orthopedagogue may work with the teacher or a group of teachers as a consultant. Also other orthopedagogues may work as specialised teachers with small group of pupils with learning problems. He then acts as a reeducation teacher. The "orthopedagogue" has a general training with language problems and a more specific training in pedagogic matters like reading, writing, arithmetic and with psychomotor disabilities. He is familiar with remedial techniques used with learning disabilities.

The "orthopedagogue" is our learning disabilities specialist who services the school and who is the closest to the class, the teacher and the child.

Another specialist in the diagnostic and remedial field of school problems is the "orthophoniste".

"L'orthophoniste" is a person specialized in language. He is trained in evaluation, diagnostic and treatment of voice and speech problems. He is also specialized in auditory problems with organic or functional causes.

The "orthophoniste role is in the normalization of the pathologic language in a helping relationship with the child who has problems in oral communication.

The orthophoniste is competent in hearing and language and considers that to know to hear is a prerequisite to the know how to speak, both know hows being furthurly the requisites of the know-how to read and the know-how to write.

In the school setting, language and hearing abilities are most important for the child who is in a learning situation. Learning in a classroom is basically a communication set between the teacher and the child. It is why, hearing and language abilities are the proper fields of the orthophoniste action in the schools. Audiometric evaluation, reference for medical treatment are the main functions for the acoustic side of the Speciality, as language training and reeducation are the main functions in speech activities.

In the school setting how the ortho-pédagogue who deals with language difficulties differentiates himself from the orthophoniste. The orthopédagogue deals with language problems occuring in the normal range of child language behavior, when the orthophoniste deals with the pathology of language and is more concerned with the relation of hearing and speaking. It is his role to establish the differential diagnosis and proper therapeutic programs with the child, the teacher and the parents.

Presently, a trend is existing to transfer the orthophoniste who works in the school, to make a transfer of these speech specialists in the health services of the new regional communitary services. Then he will be less close of the school situation, and in my opinion, the school system will loose a ueseful specialist.

Another type of specialist is the "psycho-éducateur" who is interested in the reeducation of the émotionally disturbed children and delinquent adolescents with learning disabilities.

This new profession formulate reeducation as a process that makes systematic use of the interplay of positive reciprocal influences between an appropriate milieu and the autonomous ego strengths of the youngsters undergoing reeducation. They provide a milieu in wich the emotionally disturbed child or delinquent adolescent could be given the appropriate stimulus nutriment to actualize all of his potentials - physical affective, cognitive and social - despite the paralyzing deficits of their ego, due either to the pathology of an internal conflict for the offensive acting out of the ego.

Each phase of the reeducation process implies reciprocal adaptation: adaptation of the environment to the individual and adaptation of the individual to the environment. At the beginning of a phase, environmental conditions are manipulated to create situations to which the youngster can adapt, where as toward the end of the phase, the youngster

has personnally integrated the objectives being pursued and is able to adapt himself to the situations presented to him. The process can be successful, however, only if appropriate nutriments are available at each stage.

Each stage corresponds to the main objective that is most characteristic of the particuler phase. The first stage is characteriged by the acclimatization of the child to the treatment center. The second, correspond to personnal control, referring to the child's acquisition of control in surface behavior. The third, is production, wich is the goal to be achieved through the child's activities. The fourth stage being personality, meaning the discovery and awareness of the individual's own style and identity.

Thus, the "psychoeducateur" deals more with the reeducation of personnality factors as a fundamental objective considering learning factors as means of reeducation through the remedial activities.

Most of the "psychoeducateurs" are working in boarding-schools where they have to live the regular life with children and adolescents to offer them structured programs of activities from getting-up to bed-time.

There are some "psychoeducateurs" who are employed by schoolboards as resource person working as consultants with the teachers and parents, others are working with special groups where structured remedial activities are offered to help them in their learning difficulties.

The last specialist I will talk about is the school psychologist.

As psychology is quite a newcomer in the educational system of the Province of Quebec, psychology made its appearance in the schools in 1960, when a simple amendment to a bylaw made possible the introduction into the schools of different specialists like social workers, guidance counselors, and psychologists. All of these specialists were welcomed into the schools and expectations were high. School became open to other professionals who had to play their professional roles and functions along with the ones of the teachers.

Psychologists entering in the schools brought with them the medical model wich was commonly in practice at that time as it is so often today. During almost 15 years one of the main requiriment from the school to the psychologist was psychological appraisal as the major procedure in identifying children with disabilities. Psychologists had a role of segragating and labeling them according to some arbitrary standards and to place disabled children in special education classes or groups. Now, school psychologists are tending to abandon the diagnostic labeling and the reference process for a professional involvment wich tries to give a more adequate answer to the needs of the disabled children.

By leaving his professional office in the school, to come into the classroom to observe the problems where and why they are occuring, the psychologist has to develop new remediation strategies with the teacher for the

pupils with learning needs. They have to go further than test administration, interviews, consultation, diagnosis, evaluation and counseling wich are too limited viewpoints to meet the needs of the educational milieu. It is why the psychologist is coming more and more in the classroom to observe the situation where the children's behavior are occuring. These systematic observations provide an inner understanding of the classroom setting and serve to work with the teacher new remedial activities. Prescription of learning and remediation procedures and the use of behavior modification techniques are already common procedures.

Therefore, the role of the school psychologist calls for balance wherein the needs of the child as an individual and his equal need for functionning gratifyingly within the group are both taken in consideration. In addition to his service to the child, the role of the psychologist calls for close cooperation with other members of the school's professional staff so that better integrated remedial and educational programs are developed for the learning disabled child.

And now to-day, after having been an agent of selection for special classrooms and for special groups, the new trend wich is proposed by the Ministery of Education is integration to the mainstream of school life wich means more of the treatment of the maladjusted children would be conducted within the frame work of the public schools. The psychologist to day, is already in a changing trend and has to innovate to give a more adequate answer to the changing situation.

Before concluding the outline of the roles of these different specialities, orthopedagogy, orthophony, psychoeducation and psychology as defined side by side, what are the relationships and reports between them in dealing with the learning disabled children.

I should say that there is no unique model of relationship in the professional activities of these specialities. In fact, there is as much types of relationships that we can find school teams dealing with these cases. Some have adopted team-work, others are working seperately with giving information to one another when necessary.

Most of the time, the roles and functions are rather well defined when they are hired by the schooboard and when working with the learning disabled, these specialists are acting professionally more as colleages than competitors.

It is at the level of their training that their specific roles and functions are established. The training in orthopedagogy at university is influenced by both European and American currents of thought. Training in orthophony, the "orthophoniste", is trained in a section of the medical department of the University of Montreal. Training in psychoeducation is characterized by two important streams of thinking, Piaget and Erickson wichcontribute importantly in the theoritical model of training in psychoeducation.

Psychology is like a grandmother deserving all these specialities with important contributions in each one. So, the school psychologist, is like a generalist among them and he has to face the challenge of defining for himself new roles among the constant state of change wich characterize the broad field of education.